

# Larry Jinks got his start on the family newspaper

By I. William Hill

The new president of the AP Managing Editors—Robert Larry Jinks, executive editor of the *Miami Herald* since 1972—may or may not be a born editor but, by the time he was aged 11, he'd become one.

Jinks, elected APME head October 17 in Williamsburg at the organization's annual convention, had become the editor of the *Jinks Journal* by the time he was in the fifth grade. The *Jinks Journal*, in case there's anyone who doesn't know, published a mixture of school news and round robin material editor Jinks was able to assemble from any and all the family by pointing out they wouldn't have to write so many letters to relatives if they contributed to the *Jinks Journal*.

Robert Haiman, managing editor of the *St. Petersburg Times*, recalled to E&P being shown page one of Issue No. 8 of Volume 1 of the *Jinks Journal*, published in May 1940. The banner read: "Aunt Judy visits Los Angeles."

One bit of family news for which a reader of the *Jinks Journal* would look in vain, however, because even the editor didn't know, was why he was christened just "Larry," not "Lawrence." In Williamsburg, Jinks got a wry smile when asked about it. He recalled being told that, long before he was born in Mt. Pleasant, Texas, in 1929, his father had had a favorite calf by the name of "Larry."

So ingrained were the editing skills in young Larry Jinks, however, that the first professional newspaper job he got after getting a BJ degree from the University of Missouri School of Journalism in 1950, was not as a reporter, but as news editor of the *Muskogee* (Okla.) *Times-Democrat*.

He recalled those days after coming in from a tennis game on the Williamsburg Inn courts, resplendent in a Rex Harrison type hat worn at a Rex Harrison type angle.

"I remember a headline I wrote back then," Jinks told E&P. "The 45th National Guard of Oklahoma was hot news in Muskogee and, when they were called to active duty at Camp Polk, in Louisiana, my orders were to play them big. It was even a big story when the advent of the 45th in Louisiana produced a

keeping (probably kept in sextuplicate). Anyhow, over our story about the shortage I wrote a headline my 'friends' have never forgotten: 'Functions of 45th Hampered by Paper Shortage.'"

Then, too, besides his obvious talent for editing, Jinks may be the only newsman extant able to write a letter successful in getting a job. In Muskogee, he was called in to go to work as news editor simply on the evidence of a letter of application.

"At the time they called me, I forgot to ask what the pay was," Jinks recalled. "I didn't find out till I reported for work."

Then again, after Jinks had served two years in the army during the Korean war (teaching psychological warfare at Fort Bragg, North Carolina) another letter, this time to managing editor Miles Wolff of the *Greensboro* (N.C.) *News*, got him called in for another newspaper job, this time to perform as a police reporter.

It was at about this time that Jinks began wondering if he wanted to end up as an editor or as a Washington correspondent. While thinking it over, he set about using the GI bill to get a master's degree at the Columbia Journalism School in 1956. (Seven years later, as an editor, Jinks would be on the 50th anniversary honors list of the Columbia Journalism School). But, after getting his master's, it was back to reporting, this time covering city hall for the *Charlotte* (N.C.) *Observer*. "It was also at this time," Jinks said, "that I had some of my most interesting experiences covering integration."

The editor in Jinks hadn't faded, however. He presently began to serve as Monday night assistant city editor and even to fill in on some editorial writing. In 1959, he was named city editor of the *Charlotte Observer*. One year later, he left Charlotte to become assistant city editor of the *Miami Herald*.

Jinks attended his first APME convention in San Diego in 1966, the year he became managing editor after serving as city editor and assistant managing editor of the *Miami Herald*. By then, the Washington correspondent dream was about forgotten.

As APME's new president, Jinks said he thinks that study of the



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to "Our Changing Newspapers," which incidentally will be an integral part of the coming year's continuing studies.

"The change isn't just in technology," Jinks said, "but editors need to think more about circulation and newspaper growth and prosperity when economics are against us and young people are reading less."

He went on to say that one thing APME needs is more general participation. "We've got to help each other find what people want to read and how we can best give it to them. News is no longer what the old-timers thought it was. It used to be that public institutions defined news. No longer. Now news is how events affect people."

As he talked, Jinks was characteristically intense and serious. "I keep reminding myself not to forget humor," he said once.

But serious and dedicated is what Jinks is and, as a Florida competitor remarked during the APME convention, "He is one of the best organized and coolest editors in the business."

Unflappable Jinks may be at the office, but not at home with his wife, Claire, and their three children—Laura Beth, Daniel Carlton (who has revived the *Jinks Journal*) and Beau Pottorff.

"Whenever Larry has to play handyman," Mrs. Jinks says, "I have to take the children out of the house. I can't stand for them to see all the smashed plaster and hear that language. But I'll tell you one thing that's for sure about Larry